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THE TRAINING OF THE KINDERGARTNER.

THE growth of the kindergarten idea has been one of the striking features of the movement of education in this country. Kindergartens have multiplied during the last thirty years with amazing rapidity, while the dignity attaching to them has correspondingly increased. Established first as mission centers and as feeders for the primary departments of private schools, then as adjuncts to public schools, and still supported by private means, they are at last found as integral parts of the school system in many cities, great and small. No phase of the growth of the kindergarten has been more significant, and none more bound up with its progress, than the training of its teachers. Kindergarten training schools of every kind and status have sprung up to furnish teachers. Some of this training has been most worthy and thorough, and has given the students an interest in and outlook upon the whole field of education. It has become an accepted thing that the kindergartner must be trained for her work. It has even been demanded by school boards when the same trustees accepted and installed teachers of other grades without specific training for their work.

A certain mystery has surrounded this training, and perhaps it has been this regard of the people for something esoteric in the making of a kindergartner that has been the salvation of the kindergarten as a valuable factor in the mental nurture of little children. Up to the present time the uninitiated have respected the order, "Hands off!" and it is largely owing to this respect that the kindergarten has been allowed to preserve its peculiar character and to push its way, unconformed, through the confused orthodoxy of the public school.

In their training kindergartners are taught to demand an environment for little children which includes certain fixed items, such as small groups, ample space for bodily movement, suitable and expensive apparatus and furniture; certain desirable accessories, such as music, pictures, and garden plot, are also

sought. This rigidity of requirements has both helped the kindergarten to maintain its essential characteristics as an institution and has also prevented its wider establishment. The essentials which have been preserved are, in the main, those which are now being claimed for grades beyond the kindergarten. Possibly the example of the kindergarten may have had some influence in shaping this opinion, and, if so, the training of the kindergartner, though often superficial when judged by changed standards, has had something to do with a tendency toward elasticity in public-school conditions.

But what is this peculiar character, this identity of the kindergarten, of which we speak? Is it desirable to struggle for its maintenance? The kindergarten has lived as a distinct department of education; it has exhibited certain methods and ideals; it has had a certain philosophy, and even psychology, of its own. Schools have been colored with its ideals. Because it has been able to preserve its character, it has been effective in modifying the régime of the school. The beauty of creative work and play, the necessity of joyousness, and the value of play have made their appeal to every grade, from the kindergarten to the high school; and yet something is to be said on the other side. Because the kindergarten has demanded trained teachers, and space, and expensive equipment, and has had a distinct philosophy, it has separated itself from the school. In most cases these things are accorded the kindergarten as the pet of the school system, as the baby of the family; the charm of the little child gains for it privileges that are denied the older one, who, less attractive, and apparently less sensitive, is given less care. That the building-up process is dangerous is proven when we find that by a sudden move of its school board a great school system puts its kindergartens and kindergartners under exactly the same regulations that govern the grades and teachers above them. With absolutely no concern for the lack of integrating power in five-year-old children, they are rounded up twenty-five in a class, with one teacher, who must be will-power, or stimulus, or vivacious example, or anything that will transform the herd of fickle, easily stimulated, irresponsible, sensitive little beings into the

outward semblance of an orderly community. Regardless of the strain this puts upon the kindergartner who is working in the same room with another, and her class of equal number, she is required to take another set, the same day, for a repetition of the performance. This is not education; it is not even good nursery work. And this is the sort of remodeling that the public kindergarten is liable to undergo when a movement toward equalization of salary is set on foot, with justice toward taxpayers and fairness toward other teachers as a main plank in the platform. Justice toward the teachers of other primary grades would require a leveling-down process rather than the leveling up, a diminution of numbers for her, without diminution of pay, while the quality of teaching received in return should compensate taxpayers who need justice. It is to be hoped that this is a passing phase in the process of unifying kindergarten and public schools. That the unification must go on, many conditions stand as evidence. First, the kindergartner herself too often shares in a narrow view of her function and opportunities. She is also too apt to take the part for the whole, to make the word "kindergarten" spell "education." Her sense of proportion where her work is concerned sometimes resembles that of her charges who fill the foreground and swell to major proportions that detail of the whole picture which touches most closely their experience and interest for the time. Her first glimpse of the charm of a philosophical outlook came through the doors of a kindergarten training school; it is quite natural, therefore, that she should label all subsequent views of truth, "kindergarten ideas." She has limited her associations and aspirations to the subtle, most important, but necessarily limited, work of teaching children between the ages of three and six.

Just at this juncture a most pressing need is to open to her and to all teachers by the surest process that undebatable ground which the kindergarten occupies and to which the whole school holds an often unused title. At the same time they must recognize that little playground and garden plot that belong to infancy and to children who are still in what is termed the play-stage of growth. It must be admitted, too, that the kinder-

garten as a tradition and as an institution has its air-castles with no solid ground beneath; and since the school has plenty of its own rearing, it needs none of ours.

What is the common, the undebatable, ground? Is it best that it should continue to bear the label "kindergarten property"? The kindergarten has modified the school; but it has not worked alone; tremendous forces have been at work in science, philosophy, history, and social science; and in the world of industry itself changes have come which are felt in the change of school conditions. The school at which the kindergarten looked askance twenty years ago is not the school that is growing now. In such schools as dot the New World and the Old today there are growing ideals, entirely in harmony with those of Froebel, and it behooves the kindergartner to take account of stock and see what will bear critical inspection by those who direct the movements of these schools. If her revered Froebel is beyond dissent, is she living up to the largest of his teachings?

The kindergarten has what might be termed transient and permanent values. The transient values are those modes of treatment and adaptations of subject-matter that belong especially to the child who is largely absorbed in play-processes, and to the child who has begun to seek his ends by indirect methods, but in whom play is still a dominant motor force. It is the permanent values that are absolutely common property. Under the latter we might reckon those principles of education which grew out of Froebel's sociological and psychological intuitions. This still leaves at one side the metaphysical basis of his system. To these principles the kindergartner has learned to suit her practice, more or less directly; her future training must be such that she will recognize the universal nature of these laws of growth and the continuity of social endeavor. She must not see these things as vague theory, but must know how they are being carried out in practical details throughout the school, as Froebel tried fifty years ago to put them into working shape in the kindergarten. This demands a broader culture as a foundation, a more thorough scientific basis, a training in

modern psychology, and a view of a school that is working upon these problems with children of all ages.

This demands a somewhat humble attitude on the part of the accomplished or would-be kindergartner. It means a yielding up of prerogative and individuality of her profession, that it may contribute its germ and find itself in a larger growth. First, and simplest of all, we must cease to use such expressions even of commendation as one often hears; for example, that this or that schoolroom has "the true kindergarten atmosphere." We must accustom ourselves to the general terminology, and not place the barrier of a particular one between ourselves and the rest of the educational world.

Froebel's teaching has grown because it has foreshadowed the trend of modern thought. The concept of growth by evolution is current in his writings. He builds upon the doctrines of development, of growth by use, of differentiation, and of power through adaptation to environment. There is a true psychology implicit in Froebel, and what he suggests and muses over and builds upon is the same in germ that the later and closer thinker analyzes and investigates.

The kindergartner who has been taught Froebel's doctrines owes herself the illumination of a psychology that verifies his intuitions, and a sociology that gives his humanism another ground than that of mystical metaphysics.

Where Froebel saw that "the child develops as the race," we have now volumes of research from such men as Groos, Wundt, and Max Müller to show us how and where.

Froebel taught that through the work of his hand a child grows into clearness as to the nature of the material about him and as to his own place in the long process of civilization through industrial art. It is possible now to consult a long roll of these writers upon the evolution of mind through social occupations.

Thus, if the kindergartner yields up her particular claim to the social ideal which Froebel taught, she may gain immeasurably. She knows already that Froebel incorporated certain occupations involving rhythm of movement and pleasing color and design, because a child needs these things. She knows that

he sought for an early introduction through play to the social activities of the race, that he might early feel the social contact and that he might be put in touch with the historical development of the race. It is all-important that, if this be true, she may know definitely how the animus of this play of the kindergarten is being matured in the work of older children. She will have an added sense of relative values in seeing these first employments and plays of the kindergarten as the initial steps in a long process of self- and social realization. It will surely enhance the reality and practicality of those words, "continuity" and "unity," which met her at the threshold of the kindergarten training school, and of which she has discoursed fluently in essays and abstracts. It is possible, too, that it will clear the vision of what may and should be done for the younger children. There are many more phases of this question not to be touched upon in the limits of this article, which has merely discussed the past function of the kindergarten training school and the opportunities which may open to the kindergartner of broad and deep culture, who sees the universal nature of the questions which Froebel's theories have already presented to her. For future articles are reserved the reflections which an experience with older children forces upon a kindergartner, and some observations on the different aspects of the psychological and metaphysical bases of Froebel's kindergarten.

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